

CRITICAL DIGEST

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The Weekly Newsletter Digest of the Current New York Theatre Scene

New York Theatre Diary

Another slow week on Broadway with the town's dozen shows promising to continue into the new season. Guys and Dolls, setting house records in Washington, D.C., returns to the 46th St Theatre August 24, and Hazel Flagg, with Tony Bavaar replacing John Howard as the newspaperman, returns to the Hellinger Theatre Sept 1.

Strawhat Tryouts

The new plays tried out in various summer show shops this week need rewriting before they can be considered for Broadway, trade paper reviewers report. Be Quiet My Love, Bruce Brighton's new comedy which debuted at Somerset, Mass., Playhouse, is acceptable strawhat fare, okays Dias, Variety. Though summer audience enjoyed it, mugg believes script too talky and much of the humor cheap and vulgar for a NY try. Some Little Honor, Josephine Bentham's comedy viewed at Woodstock, NY, Playhouse, might have a chance on Broadway if some of the 3rd act trouble is cleared, reports Morse, Billboard. The comedy of adolescence and suburbia contains some superb comedy writing, while Michael Lipton in the role of a promoter with "whammeroo" brainstorms scored a personal triumph. Scribblers Three, written by and starring Erio Blore, made a summer sellout at the Barter, Va. Playhouse, but Ande, Variety, doubts if it is strong enough as it now stands for a Broadway try. First act is much better than 2nd and 3rd, which are too talky and too long, mugg notes. Winter Palace W. Lewis and Angus Bailey's play, which tried out at Arden, Del. Theatre, needs major surgery, states Klep, Variety. 1st act of drama of New England mill town family gets off on wrong foot, critic believes, with excess wordage and slow plot development.

London Report

The most distinguished performer of the London theatre is Noel Coward, currently starring in Shaw's The Apple Cart at London's Haymarket Theatre, raves Morehouse, World Telegram & Sun. Critic wonders if Coward's gifts as an actor have been truly appreciated. His talents are so abundant, his contributions to the theatre so varied, many have probably been inclined to take his acting for granted. But the seeing of his sheer magic makes Morehouse realize that he is and long has been one of the most expert of English speaking players. Admitting that he may have been somewhat too enthusiastic about the English theatre, Watts, Post, filed a "con" notice on Alan Melville's current London comedy hit Dear Charles. Script, based on a 1920 farce by American Fred Johnson, then transformed into a French play which now receives an English adaption, still seems like a 1920 farce to the NY critic.

Hits Revisited

While Wish You Were Here still is not a great show, Hobe, Variety, reports that a year after its opening it is unquestionably a bright, lively, tuneful, engaging and very entertaining one. Despite Josh Logan's widely publicized revisions the trade paper drama editor doubts if the specific changes are outstanding. But the overall effect is notably improved. The revisit to the show merely reinforced his "con" vote, mostly because with exception of Shelia Bond, critic does not think there is an outstanding performer in the company. While production itself is "setting on the sloppy side. Hobe blames this on fact that Logan has been busy with Lind Sir and Fanny,

' Village Theatre '

The Repertory, a newly formed producing group, takes over the Davenport Free Theatre. Group opens Sept 22 with David Berg's Mother Riba. The next week the group will be present Robert Ardrey's Thunder Rock.

ONE Foot to the Sea, Harold Levitt's play at Originals Only, rated an okay from Jess, Variety. Tradepaper mugg agreed with Rice, Post, that play is one of the 5 year old group's better offerings. Though characters, with but 2 instances, fail to make any notable impression, play received a thorough production. Donald Stuart and Pat Crawford were applauded in the Tom Hill staged production.

' Off Broadway '

The Loves and Hates of Will Shakespeare will be presented at Caravan Hall 110 E 59 Aug 17-19 with Maxine Sullivan, Frances Foster and Richard Ward... Here We Come Gathering, a new farce by Phillip King will be presented next week at Dobbs Ferry, NY, Playhouse.

A Doll's House is currently playing week-ends at Jan Hus House, 351 E 74. Presented by Rhoda Handler and Rose Lynch, cast includes June Tolley, Jack Daniel, and Bill Schust... In October Everyman will be presented at Jan Hus House, with Ida Ehrich as supervisor. She also plans to present The Girl From Samos there.

' Vaudeville '

Alan Carney, film comic, heads the new Palace stage show. With Don Sinclair and Gloria Alda, Maude Hilton and Marion Lee, Brownlee Sisters, Phil Ramone, Canfield Smith, and the Ortons

' Yiddish Theatre '

A House on Grand Street, the 1st play by Yiddish poet Kadia Molodofsky opens season at President Theatre in October.

' Curtain Calls '

The problem of curtain calls, how many, how long and who is to decide upon them, was considered in a "Stage" editorial. British tradepaper believes that the encoore and curtain call is all part of the fun and adds to the enjoyment of the occasion.

But tradepaper does note as the audiences go on clamouring for encores, night after night, year after year, the artists, though appreciating the compliment, must get heartily sick of being requested to repeat the purple patches of their performances.

Stage managers sometimes try to stimulate enthusiasm in an audience, the editorial reports, by attempting to get more curtain calls than the public wants. They ring up the curtain on the dying echo of the applause, when patrons are more intent on getting home than contemplating a line of bowing artists.

To snatch curtains when there is no real call for them is an embarrassment to both the artist and the audience, "Stage" acolds. It is far better to send the public away longing for yet another glimpse of the players than to detain them against their will. If actors, as we are so often reminded, are the servants of the people, the editorial concludes, surely the public and not the stage manager should decide upon the number of curtain calls. It is better that there should be too few than too many.

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Green Room Department

COMBINE ACTIVITIES...The plans of the Dowling-Stevens-Whitehead \$1 million theatre corporation to run theatre productions in a business like way is just what the industry needs, praises Pearson, NBC Critic At Large. The cold hand of business, as presently operated, is already in the process of stifling the art of the theatre, the broadcaster notes. A little now planning by business men with acquaintance with the theatre would be a good thing...The Coronet and Fulton, managed by the new company, will put comfortable love seats in the first few rows, Gardner, Herald Tribune, reports. If the 1st 6 rows are scaled up in price, the last 6 in the orchestra will be scaled down. Roger Stevens in a Sunday Herald Tribune article denied a Variety lead that the new combine might war with the Shuberts. Instead they plan to co-operate with the Shuberts and book their plays in the latter's houses when their own are all occupied.

CRITICAL ANALOGY...The umpire of a baseball game has much in common with a drama critic, believes a Times "Drama Mailbag" letter writer. Whatever the majority sentiment of those present, the umpire must call the plays as he sees them, reader observes. The possible circumstance that a valiant effort was made by a certain participant cannot and should not alter the umpire's ultimate decision. The judgement he voices must be based solely upon results rather than good intentions. Play Ball!

COLUMN TIPS...Mike Todd will probably not want the Jones Beach Theatre for any outdoor show next season, hears Wilson...George Jean Nathan and Theatre Arts have parted company, reports Winchell...Theatre Guild will receive \$851,000 in C installments for Oklahoma from Rodgers & Hammerstein, Variety understands.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...The dullest character in any even half way fair play is a veritable Spring tonic compared to the majority of characters you come into contact with during the hot off season, pans Nathan...Not more than a handful of the 20 summer tryouts earmarked for Broadway will actually make it, glumly predicts Variety...Theatre fans can walk up to almost any box office on an August Saturday and get good tickets for the matinee performance, advises Morehouse, WT&S.

PLAYS & PLAYERS...There are many complaints against the naturalistic school of the drama as practised by both playwrights and actors. Watt, News, adds his voice against it simply because he has gotten a little tired of seeing actors try to act too much like people. Desperate little journeys into realism are fine, he comments, when you have a 1st class writer to take you along. But, he warns, they have become a kind of obsession and end in themselves. They have the short coming of making actors as small as life. You see enough people every day.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...Mariko Niki, learns Morehouse, WT&S, simply walked into the auditions for The Teahouse of the August Moon, did a reading, and walked out with the leading feminine role of the play due Oct 15. The Japanese model has been studying English at Columbia University since she arrived in NY 6 months ago...Ray Walston, Me and Juliet, is probably the only actor ever to set type on a reviewers copy, Platt, Post, reports. Actor was a linotype operator at the NY Herald Tribune and set type, among others, for Howard Barnes' reviews. Ray used the paper's linotype machine to set type for a letter to Hunt Stromberg, Jr which landed him a role in Three Indelicate Ladies.

Pros & Cons by TMK

Barrett Clark, president of Dramatists Play Service, died this week. Though so far the reviewers have not filed tributes to him, he is insured a place in modern drama history.

His main contribution was insuring that the dramatist received 50% royalties on future non professional productions of his script.

' NYC Theatre News Round Up '

Broadway producers are watching with great interest several experiments which are attempting to make the usually painful process of theatre ticket buying easier. Though summer theatres and most theatres outside of NY accept telephone reservations, Broadway producers agree that the high rate of "duds" makes this practice unworkable in NY. Two variations of "charge account" plays have proved successful this summer. The Savoy Theatre in Asbury Park, N.J. simply bills its regular patrons at the end of the month for the amount of tickets bought. While the Pittsburgh, Pa. Playhouse, has made arrangements with several local banks to deduct the price of theatre tickets directly from the patron's bank account.

Recently the "Diner's Club", which bills its 100,000 members monthly for hotel and restaurant tabs acquired in various spots across the nation, has been investigating the possibility of allowing its members to charge theatre tickets at box offices and ticket agencies coast to coast.

The controversial Mason Tax Bill, designed to repeal the 20% tax on motion picture admissions while ignoring the 20% tax on legitimate theatre admissions, received a "pocket veto" from President Eisenhower. In a "memorandum of disapproval" he stated that the Government could not afford the revenue loss, and that the bill was unfair and discriminatory to single out one industry for relief at this time. Meanwhile at the House Ways and Means Committee hearings in Washington, Dennis King, Lawrence Langer and James Reilly presented the theatre's case for a cut in the admission tax.

Plays

"Carnival In Flanders" moved from Los Angeles to San Francisco...A sure sign of success reported by Pionio, which announces that tickets are now on sale through Dec 26...Herman Levin will present At Home With Ethel Waters on Broadway in early Sept...Cole Porter's next show will be a musical version of Ninotchka, the Melchior Lengyel satire on Russian life which MGM made famous with its Garbo film. George S. Kaufman and his wife, Leueen MacGrath are working on the book.

People

Jarmila Novotna, Met mezzo-soprano, will appear opposite Basil Rathbone in Bill Doll's production of Sherlock Holmes...Arnold Moss and Dennis King have signed for Major roles in On Earth as in Heaven...Maxine Sullivan will make her Broadway debut in a straight play in Take A Giant Step...Maurice Evans and Leland Hayward have received "Christopher Awards"...Helen Hayes has set up a Mary MacArthur scholarship at the American Theatre Wing.

Theatre TV Notes

Ezio Pinza stars in "I, Bonimo" situation comedy series starting Sept 12 on NBC TV...Phyllis Hill, The 5th Season, doubles as the lead in NBC TV daytime soap opera "Three Steps to Heaven"...Mae West will star in and produce a series of TV films based on famous historical romances...Joseph Schildkraut will star in a weekly DuMont TV series on Tuesdays.

Theatre Book Notes

"Future Indefinite" is the logical title of the final volume in Noel Coward's autobiographical series...Random House is distributing the 4 volume "Nonesuch Edition" of Shakespeare which retails at \$35 per set...Louis Kronenberger, Time critic, will use the "Burns Mantle's Best Plays of 1953-54" title for his Dodd, Mead collection.

